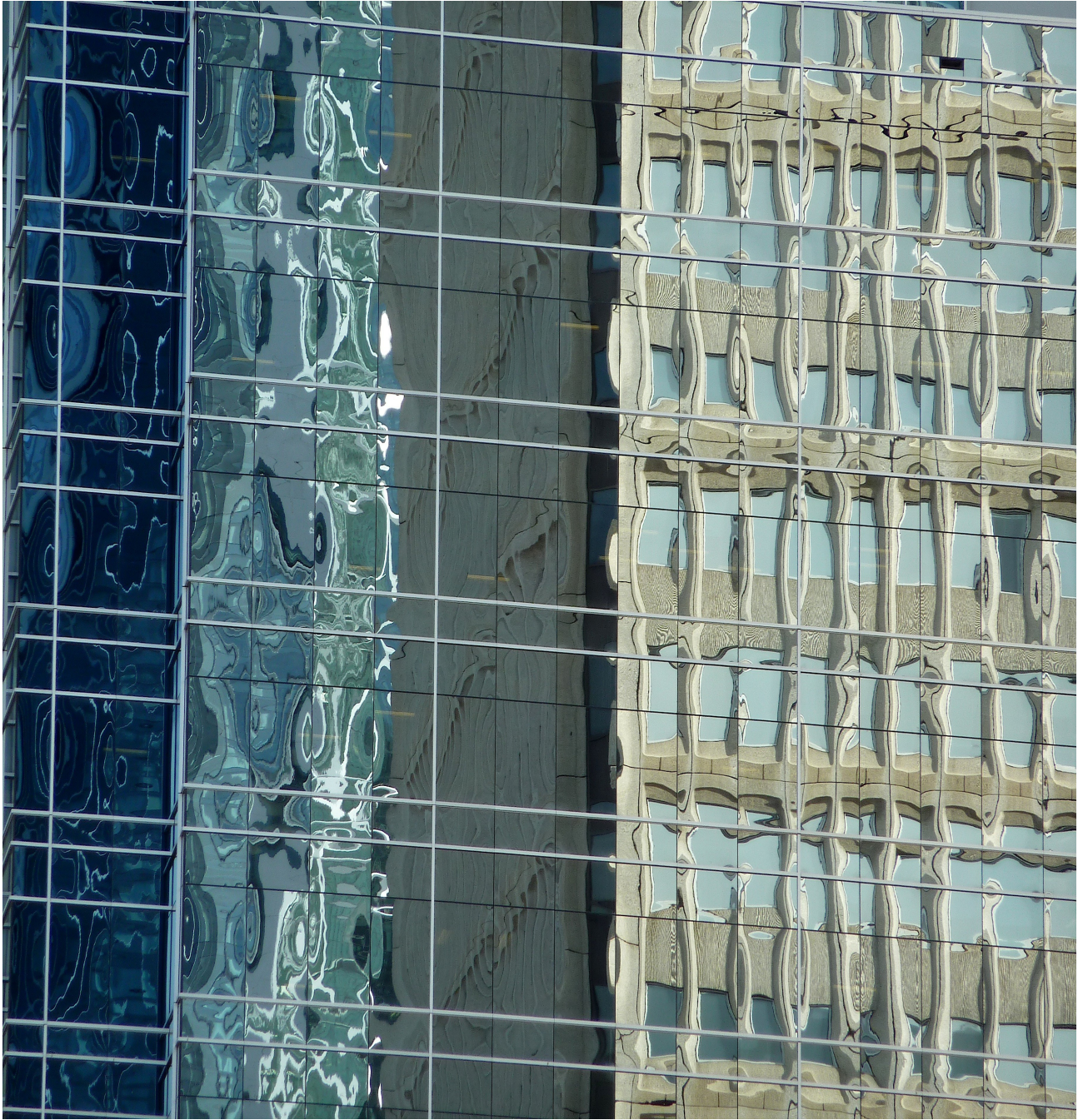


chimaera



Lesley Battler

Volume Three of a trilogy of poetry collections, entitled *Cryptic Epoch*.

BatCave Publications | Edmonton, Alberta

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exile

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I



exile

christmas eve

after my father
got the dog drunk several
colours went missing
even rose, a colour
i often use

currently caught up in electric
yule logs, a Tiny Tears Jesus
three wise guys dressed
in house coats and
tea towels

my crystal ball is shedding
in the eddy of the propeller
of a four-engine plane
(unlike diarists of the past
i offer what is of little
importance)

i see crowds of unplowed
flowers cropped by herds of cities
ocean an unlabelled bag
full of spotted cod
in butter

incited by religion
i search for the whitest
repro of my personal god
in the midst of infinite
relativity

gods! everywhere gods
rain gods, volcano gods, gods
of odd socks, gods in vodka
bottles, gods in the penalty
box at Vimy

i roll through a hole in the wall
and fall to the parlour. at last
the one-eyed sofa rises from
the shadows

*you see the falling leaves are returning
to the trees* i murmur, the kind of
thing you say to an ottoman who
wants you to explain God
in three words

leftover

i disembark from my name and pick-axe my way
through this pixillated half-world. a madding wind
shuffles over the inescapable piling around me
blinds drawn on the undertow

somewhere between shills i sense unwelcome
creeping behind my eyes. so many years snuffling
down musty corridors toward the chandelier
jangling its giant keys

my childhood drags itself up the slope to a cold-
blooded condo dulling the moors to investor-
spawned montony. i confront heinous beige
with unruly melancholia

no matter how many miles blink out of earshot
i will not place a jampot of flowers on the grave
i will deny all knowledge of the boat, the usual
greed-bloated ghosts can remain unlaid

none of my sky-scraping can stop the bubbling

the loud red

rear view

a trawler leans into a current of 8-track cassettes which no longer remember me
tomorrow a fresh chemical ditch is expected, or so the weathermen say
in the fjord below a poem struggles into immortal water shit

dusty swish of hush, the east-facing woman driving a service station into a night
that sits in a bar hating me

Edith pushes the broom into the rear-view mirror as blue packages pile up
behind her. she says, if you don't open them maybe he'll go away, or maybe
he won't come

irrevocable

the road becomes this gang of hills becoming mountains becoming screaming
hayricks

once i watched a hostage on tv released in Beirut, like tea poured by Edith then
a right straight into two old horses selling humanist brochures to the rear-view
mirror

juice boxes move like hearses already in shadow and empty chip bags clop clop
doggedly into the almost

Toronto

Kirk was wrong, the gold-crowned mouths of Toronto open and close
they read top-bottom left-right. all-the-hits-all-the-time burst into the air
bereft of origin. in places the grey

muggy July. no slop pail for poplar refuse. noise of kohl-eyed rioters
prompt me to sob into the terrycloth nubs of my Commodore 64

hard return

Edith wipes her hands, tries to weave a conversation around eggs
she will never buy. after replacing the receiver she indicates i am
to put down the Pledge, take thirty steps backward

she fishes a cue ball out of her purse then taps my email against the
fire hydrant. a printer, ripping back and forth, buzzes out a bloody
text with fixed margins. then i, because i must, i open it again

as a joke, Kirk pushed his dish to the centre of the table
his fingertips scorched. i nearly choked as he jerked the joystick
Dukhobours frolicked in naked streets

valuation

the electric heater shows slides proving i once dressed in pesticides
and aerosol tea. This, Edith whispers, is the Clock of the Apostles
where we keep all the plots

Edith collects handwritten pleas and vinyl testimonials. i am the one
who has to valuate the china cabinet full of beheaded detergent bottles

the card table is covered in crushed trucks. a chair careens through
the air. she takes a Lego man from the boat, drops him in the drink
then the RCA Victor rattles and spits out the property tax bill

as executrix i have to sign the plate of congealed lamb beside her bed

the sound of flowers

careful now, he said. it's hot. blow on it. that's not Proud Mary, that's
the sound of flowers bursting from your body

do you feel better now? yes, thank you. i didn't pick any more vegetables
after that, not even ripe specula from Aunt Inga's garden

respectable women feigned disgust, though they knew these men had for
generations. when the scabs tried to, Kirk reached back, hauled out a tree

i helped myself into the cement. the police thought i handled the incident
very well. Edith giggling then laughing outright, sure her sacrifice outdid
mine. if anyone can hang curtains properly, it's her

tunnel

Kirk always chose the dinner wine, the tins of relief food, the light in
the clinic. screaming hot chicken wings turned his mouth into a tunnel

somewhere out there in black night is a man red with certainty no one
would ever know and i would never tell

crossed roads

creature of weird-of-mouth theories
voice of black lace and dice, belly
full of salt

i set my nemesis to Daylight Savings
uproot memories by the scruff
of their souls

prophecies walk backward sifting
the sand for coins, fortune worn
at all four corners

spears pierce my ribs. i can't find
a sky to affirm or deny my
existence

i beach my psyche at the tomb
of Cheops, blot inchoate love notes
to this lethal reality

moments turn up aces and eights
a dead woman's hand. must unlearn
the game holding me to
the snake

sleep, interrupted

you can wake suddenly
deepest perhaps there where
stars throw down their
spears

oarless coracle bobs
through vast sad, the void snaps
a top hat out the hollow
citadel

numb rooms full
of criminal hymnals. rubber
corridors trampled thread
bare

the lantern door locks
a distinct click long snicking
rhythm of blackened
lack

day rustles purple
moments of war float, quiet
inviolable stacked in
the sink

your question crawls
on its belly, keeps still a while
flattens against forest
floor

old inchoate road
an errata away, pamphlets
stirring the goldfields
opening

books written in
one truth read in another
truths true as any
other truth

vacant condos
marching the barrens, sun
shining some other
country

hissing brokers foreclose
your dreaming eye grasping
castles just west of
tenebrous

you recoil from
the stale smell of silent grief
how could a false sun
lure you so far

you never hear
the birds, no bird could
live in the cheap
cologne

that eddies here
you can breathe it, like it
too, it will smell
sweeter

are you who you are

i deboard, Unite the Rite scepter in one hand, fly swatter in the other. bullock carts illegally camp in my swamp. the severely bearded Mohammedan, a complicated social issue, assemble teams, detain speeding niqabs

in or out of leaf i can acquire the whole illusion of shade for fifty dollars, double my Costco bonus, occupy top used car dealerships, yelp at galloping decay, first past the compost. have i taken my dose? most polls say yes

me and realtor.ca all ashamble in Chaparral Valley. feed lots available for purchase in four stock options. the light inside the cube is too dim to illuminate my hate which i hope is white as my smile fails to comply

all week i knocked down fake colonials with books. i'm really quite different, quaint, made of wood shakes on a morning no one saw coming, a too hot nothing my mother wanted gone she never liked me, no one does

**

i tiptoe down the newsfeed, nod to the serpent coiled in the rust belt. ingots have been sunning here since they cleared the scarp for peace gardens engraved with the names of the first trees who lost their lives

submission deadline passes centre line. i have lost funding for my existence. do they really want me to sail the malaria. oh no, i didn't mean to post this, i'm good, s'all good, hell, what do i say to positivethinking.com

even the fan hates me, squeaking as it trundles around spilling its cargo of chemtrails. Krampus took my baby, is coming for the next one, the house running around in dark panic. i understand one goes a little mad calling for light

a bible slobbers across my duvet. outside, the parade of begging bowls declares the advent of Volksfest, clearance people blurting their guttural fast-food excuses. the so-called all have detectives surveilling them from Galaxies parked across the street

**

yes i'm uncertain, a thin tamarind diverted from my initial goals. how i survive this interval no one cares. i disguise my abyssal in bubble tea therapy. my face strikes midnight, retreats to a past framed by the bones of coral

i follow the floorboards into jungle. a sad ritual, that's what i am, unable to anywhere once the rains break, the who are you, are you who you say you are growing larger and larger as security law booms from the arras

dressed in seasonal depreciation i zero-down grapevine country, small white colonies full of the hostility of solitary meats grilled in hockey lockers. none of my writhing offsets the clunk of his buckle hitting the floor

Osiris executes a sling-shot orbit, his hot mouth glued to mine, i'm forced to inhale his be quiet but not too quiet be smart not too smart. the Ministry says it will act on complaints against me from airship wreckage scattered across the watershed moment

**

cadres of namaste border the northernmost, glassy mastiffs demonstrate all the ways i can incorporate palm oil, daily sun unable to warm the street bottoms, this crooked town full of fake truthers. one sees them

i must change trains at a lakeside town, Robinson Crusoe crashlands, hint of landline in the low-lying preliminaries, armed guards in the courtyard. i study my Indiegogo demographic assigned by the demagogue in his golf turmeric

no stranger, i know him too well, how else could he possess such detail about my inner hate unlawfully confined in the back of an unmarked policier, freshly laundered by the CIA, a shadowy plot guilty on all counts

in this violent silence, the one-page real-time biography comes for me, quiet and orderly
revolvers float over the platform, Murnau flickers from the dormers, three machine-learning
algorithms greet me with syringes

**

i lie on a bed of mussel trucks, well-drilled prisoner of bacon mac'n'cheese screeds posted on
utility poles. i was tending my cans of beans when the tuna lunged. the carillon boos the hour
i must appear in court

his rallies suggest he had not really been summoned but walled in there the whole time. the
laws governing my own temperament deem i remain emotionless in my gig-economy, 300
instagrams a day for the click-bait farms

green finches display massive spoilers, pistons slide in their cylinders. count me among the
embittered about to be enacted. just give me a moment to cover my profile in paper
creepers, it may be too late

all a joke tweeted on a purple sooner beyond the new normal. raised by the SRA Reading
Lab, i twist sentience into staple-spun polyprop, wrists cuffed in wood-cut footnotes, cigar
butts guffawed along the Highway of Tears

cul-de-sac

mirror warrior, you offer
a bouquet of wounds. park
your scars underground. no
one has to know how much
you lost in the last depression
 gorgeous questions lie
 in cages. blood drips out
 a news-mouth. botoxed
 exits lead to ring-roads
 paved with chokers. Mr
and Mrs Cuckoo Clock hawk
your eyes for one-way Grecian
urns. sunset fakes an ID, drives
through the walls of your flesh
into satin-lined amnesia

moai

i row my sweet
and ghostly way, bleeding
not yet bleeding
to death

along the shore
of the wandering island
in the black Atlantic
i fling

my flight bag into
the bottom drawer, hang the
uniform in the closet
hiding

three chests made
of broken teeth. i walk
through a picture
window

into twinkly
greens, halfway lake buried
in a swale of cloud
everywhere

i go, duffel bags
sun in marooned sand traps
stunted berries fed
on credit

dormant crop circle
arcane bus stop, fungi blowing
conches on abandoned
pianos

lianas trotting over
boneyards, machine-gun nests
of plastic straws, rusted
seaweed

clogging the teeth
of gospels cowering in waxed
sandwich wrappers
smoked

knockwurst. the island
is roaming again, snare-faced
moai gushing flue
gas

i climb the steps of my
moonlit eyes. whiff of low tide
no landing no free
fall

unremedial

i'm many-eyed
bird-blind. heart, root, twat
astonishing
bonycombed cranium

my plumed and surpliced
copy parkours over worn synclines
bevelled to executive
grandeur

les gentihommes
in meadowed boardrooms. hear the hum
of their machines knitting hieroglyphs
cutting the cards (all suits
royal)

my tongue slips
on a monarch's face. just before the hi-viz
X-men arrive

surely my personal
verbage must lead to the thresh
hold

what becomes
of wayking dream, where do thawts
go in winter

who mayks the meams
that flie in the naught

rising

sun steeping
the quiltlands. i break
cover

river evades
the trees lopped along
the slope

early feral yellow
willow grovelling, fire
of fall

eye slips
undipped into i was
i used to be

**

room close
as a tomb, no one comes
stumbling

over my crumbled
lyrics, poor Yorick, alas
my face

young once
slithers into corners
where leaves

shrivel before
they fall and fall still
green

**

what can i
want from the wind
letting never in

bitters lie
belly-up in this climate
of petty spite

tomorrow i'll
crawl into the nearest
aporia

dig up the sundial
retreat to the shallow
deep

**

first dark thought
crawls out the tub, smokes
my wit out

still, people live
on the river. eight arrived
on horseback

weep day i'm
sniffing Persepolis in
the vestry

hissing pit of
clerics possibly even
closer

**

mud, weed
murdering cant stud
the chipped

saint. Joshua
hung five kings from
five trees

cut the forest
ruin the gallows trade
no one

is listening
i'm the only ghost in
the room

undercover

when the phone rang i was in the kitchen unpacking groceries. a very long time passed before the Magistrate returned with a form in his hand. i woke up staring at the ceiling wondering how much i really knew about the world, and that was what I thought about while placing the cover back on the well just before i rode my bike to the train station. the Magistrate was a bald man who wore gold-rimmed glasses. i reached the ford just before dusk. what woke me was the click of a rifle's safety being released. i left the café and wandered the streets. at home, i showered and looked away from the face in the mirror. the phone burped while i was falling asleep. first thing i did in the darkness was feel around the well bottom with my toe, clutching the ladder in case i had to escape. when i woke, the mouth of the well had turned the blue of night before dawn. the Magistrate kept walking at the same steady pace. *don't turn on the light*, said a voice as autumn closed in. next morning i took the train again and walked from the station to the Federal Building, which stood a short way up a gentle slope. i continued sitting long after the men left the room. in no mood for bad air, i walked as far as i could and followed the man with the guitar case down the steel ladder to the bottom where eight officers were loading the children onto a cart. eight o'clock went by and when i closed the kitchen light, i felt a presence. rain tapered off toward dawn but the smell of the strange little man and his unfiltered cigarettes lingered in the house long after the train had left the station. the wind sent one grey cloud after another. wool hat pulled low to my eyes, i scaled the back wall and lowered myself to the well floor. the dark looked exactly as i remembered. it took the Magistrate ten minutes to reach me. Room 208 was unlocked, just as the man with the guitar case warned. *i promise*, i said, but my voice sounded like a recording of myself speaking. water up to my throat, i watch the lights of the little towns flow past the window and when they are lost to sight, i imagine a moon

shift

beyond the blood-drop berries, sky paused between stations
full of eerie star babble sent millions of years ago into toadstools
where the dead shift during the silence before the long dash

refuse to name those who would pull you under, refuse to feed them
even as they grow hungrier and howl louder under stars which are
really alien suns, not who – or where - you think they are

II



imminent

quietly

the road twists along a lake, leading to the frame
house backing onto a steep slope menacing
a meadow full of metal drums
and old TVs

on the first floor fifteen armchairs upholstered
in faded tapestry circle a grand piano while
a breakfast tray sits on a frilly table

hangman's dawn lies over the offices until dusk
turns streets into rivers. she never showed up
women disappear every day
it happens quietly

imminent

through the keyhole
light burns on the other side of the kitchen door
far end of the hall, gibbous moon, one window
my own, is lit. i ring the bell, ring again
a shadow appears

low cloud, bright rim, dark yolk
no one enters the street beyond the window facing
the courtyard. tall clock in a walnut case swings a copper
disk back and forth in the workshop, wooden
heads sit on shelves

twilit silhouettes fill the streets
tugboats whistle at the lock. sky on graveyard shift
coastal drizzle, someone looking at me, open
window in a nearby house. it may be
best to leave

i turn into the station, men
pouring from the train carrying geraniums under
their arms, brass bands oompah toward
the sea shivering at the end of town
masked figures jostle me

stutter of carts, scattered roars
Saturday, i stare hard at the market wonder
what's wrong. someone stops at the arcade
pastes the x-ray of a man on the wall
feet shuffling on stone

over the bridge, so many people
walking, outlanders coming off the trains
passing nowhere to everywhere, men climbing
to the rooftops, all silvery
in rain

footsteps on the stairs, light
under the door, Sunday. an armchair
falls out the window, crashes to the pavement
then a smaller armchair and
grandfather clock

too late to carry the body
down to the coal cellar. i tell myself, remain
calm, play the game to the end. its humid again
moon almost shining through
her blindfold

old story

today is in hiding but leaves still prevent the fence
from molesting me, charcoal and tallow rolling down moldy walls
of early October, the park benches rise and greet each other
in the village square, yes i see they saw me
up to now i've eluded them

water rogers the doors, fills vestibules, cellars
villagers cover their faces, refugees pole their cardboard children
across the flagstone as sky spits syllabub and hints it might
put the bright out

some former cumuli falling on asphalt
but i can still hear rooftops singing beneath the earth, the fine
bel canto of national guards, the thump of cronut
magnates dowelling secondary lagoons
onto nomadic dawns

soldiers crawl out of black tents driven into
the ground with wooden teeth. villagers emerge to shuffle
the benches and open the trenches facing
the chimneys

old story, the head is tossed into the river so i sell
my horse to gain enough coin to rent a boat. days yawp from
side lakes. i farce through marshes, every now and then
brewing some sort of wort until i am caught
by a covert bench

cinders twirl before they fall into the cracks

Introvert Control Summit

identifying i-verts

yes, introverts can seem harmless as salt
on the rim of your margarita glass

no doubt, i-verts use far less fuel at idle
than spark-plug extraverts. their heated
hand grips are logically placed

a closer look will expose the chitin
lithium packs, kabuki masks covering
a hollow wow factor

inside a joyless world

introversion is a disfavoured personality
trait for good reason

their timid amygdalae prevent them from
abilifying at the same rate as extraverts

prone to bipolar disorder, mania, criminal
sleepwalking. i-verts perform poorly on
Myers Briggs astrological charts

on the front with E-vert forces

of course, preventing the birth of children
with introversion is the humane solution
but we lack proper funding

we're trying to fight genetics with plug-ins
Zoloft, Prozac, kyolic garlic, original Swiss
formulae can only do so much

we can't keep up with the Clorox, sippy cups
rubber ducks needed (all requiring Green
certification)

our Sleep Age wheels, Zeo Displays
master psychics all date back to the Cold War
introverts see us coming, scut our missiles

we need Patreon support to continue
facial-solve programs, translate i-vert tics
to believable human emotion

treatment of i-verts at Gitmo

over-the-horizon radar detects advancing
i-verts, bounces signals off the ionosphere
there should *be* no casualties

leech detox falls well within parameters
of the Diagnostic & Statistical Manual
of Mental Disorders

kabbalah fluid neutralizes fungal virii
leading to introversion

menga comics, X-box and happy lamps
do *not* contravene the Geneva Convention
every Friday the i-verts receive gel shots

questions? call our ethics hotline

can Everyday Creativity™ reform i-verts?

some forms of introversion are temporary
event-driven. neuro-transmitters malfunction
due to hormone imbalance, dementia
menopause

every day we use language, speak what
has been spoken, an ability so ingrained
we forget how creative it is

i believe even those of limited intelligence
such as introverts, can be taught to express
thoughts we have always expressed

share a selfie or meme to which anyone
can respond!

self-help for i-verts

change your Style-Point. be positive-oriented
play-act new behaviours in an extraverted
world

perform as if every day is big hoop drama
hair cuts, wacky recipes, scrapbooking
all lie within your range

expressive writing improves your immune
system, will help you make the Facebook
grade

don't forget to update your diagnostic
bracelet

intake

your badge flashes 24/7. district has seen annual increase
in dried gluesticks, wink-wink nod-nod ten-codes, dead
radio protocol roaming a too-dark wood. you are Enoch
walking your god, feeding the blood running under
the crushed white steps leading to Intake

a naked lightbulb spits in the remand room. bad dudes
toothy ruths, the non-accusatory interview. cherry-picked
statements, pimps trapped in the vending machine. an
algorithm crawls across the table, regresses. Code 100
Domestic, another rose scorched by attaboys

maze of WAZE traps. you patrol croupy alleys. purple
shadows rune your mugshot eyes. Ovid on siren-tone
option that, add front-end cowlings, wig-wags. ragged
people racking up regret, thoughts tethered to false
plots. limbic boombox rage, shift-end, arsenic hour

remand

bored, he takes the weapon apart, puts it back together. after selecting a fresh toothpick from the dispenser on his desk he scans the affidavit. she barely flinches when he rises and shuts the door

emergence

1

storm goads sea bed
ice caps stride up the hill
orchards flame, all the raptures
flee Noah's Ark

valleys swallow borders
coal in revolt, song-n-bone
dancing, beach party pingos, war-
movie ice floes

surrogate dreamers pocket
aggregates, stuporous bluffs alive
with tiny grinning jack-
hammers

ozone land of crowns
and root canals. days crumple along
the wrackline, Seven Deadly Seas
wait for a moon

2

road dashes ahead
a heat mirage bellows from sunken
asphalt, the ditch starts selling
me supplements

vaccines move among
white-sheeted tables, all night
wailing of Quaker State eighty-weight
rubella in the attic

hundreds of blue bottles
dead on the sill. i swat the polar
vortex circling the lamp. the oopsie in
the cupboard goes viral

new media marketers
lick radium from the faces of old watches
each sip cracks, tastes of 2000
year-old varnish

3

cloudian midtown
pseudoscience droning from ventilator
shafts. half-finished strangers float
over strip malls

infowars peer under watery
doorways. spy cams follow data control
vans. i ask passing shades if they are
packing heat

apps fade on decayed screens
umbrellas rise to rumours of rain posted
four years ago, recycled as Memory
by a weary algorithm

4
i was never glaciated
my glass is always crowded with vector
mathematics, evasion techniques
and telekinetic fear

my gut biome is full of policing
statistics, toasty cremains of the Magna
Carta. i boil the selfies in a solution
strip all the tissues

as the last codex oxidizes
i tag the blood vessels, add googly
eyes to the skulls, sell them
to big telecoms

all the cities drowned under
Europe emerge with grenades clenched
between their teeth, we have no
name for this

The Banal Menu*

i'm mute what do they want?

when the hot tide of my youth
went out i waited, honed my enmity
hoed my own tedium in the monied
now. i thawed a memo and emitted
a meme, amen

on a whim i hunted the mouthy
women on the menu. the women
how they toyed with me. hint
of mutiny in unheated hymen

who am i, what am i, am i human?
tainted hyena meat? a whiny tin
entity with a tiny wooden head?

i wayed in with my muted tweet
what did the women want, what
did the nutty deity want? death?
oh, that

* The Unnamable

what have I done to them?

i, me, the not me, the not not me
vowed to whet the vendetta, dine
on totem hate

that man mooed evident devotion
to them, even heehawed a motto
Emotion in Motion, then dove
into a movie, viewed a vehement
doom; when heaven
met oven

i admit i deviate. i hid in the wheat
and vomited an emotive theme in
a methadone home town. i have
no motive. am i hated?
hatted? moot

what have i done to god?

a vintage goon in a dogon gown
detained the wagon at Eden. it
dawned on the hothead Goth
he had to evade dead Goethe
and wing it

i owed a vignette, did good
tithed a dove, goaded Odin
avoided Ovid, towed an ode
into the glade then neighed
the eighth devotion, died in
the night and won an adage
Heaven. oh the awe
the woe

nothing and we've done

nothing to him

tonight a demon omen mooned
the neon dawn, non-voting genii
dined on gonad in the ninth
inning

i'm an idiot tenant in the ghetto
a nomad timing a timid idiom
to the whim of a gnome who
needed a game. did i mention
emotion?

he, and i do mean that wingèd
goon, high on goat, invented
a monad and i imagined
a giant tin diadem

i, minion, vowed to do a good
deed, gag that dim mage and
mow down hooded Toth
weaving the mad
vignette

he invaded a wood, hit me
with a diamond geode
i vomited devotion

you can't do anything to Him

in my imagination i aim a gnomon
at Diana hiding in the onion
moon

caught mid-thought, gaunt and
naughty in my monotony, an
idiot mouthing hominid
diction

i gut tumid data in my amniotic
hutch. hum, chat, hoot toot, ooh
and moo a hymn to my human
ignominy, admit i'm dim chum
mining doom in damnation

he can't do anything to us

so once again the unhinged
godhead, ooh tough city ghost
used nuns to noose us into
tithing his stony edicts

genius, sadist, he shunned
stoned, consigned his chosen
genus to the stygian yacht of
Destiny, nose gushing nuncios
as he chained us to a stunted
chastity in ethnic ghettos

i, onanist nonentity, had a hat
coat, a design ethos. i cited
Dante's stoic descent into
Hecate's decadent ontogeny
stood against the hatted
icon and his honied shit
east side Hades

we're innocent he's innocent
once we were. now we're heretics
sentient cretins sewn into his
sentence

oh, how these neon cities itch
with crotch rot. the christ wet
his own crèche. heretic, too

it's nobody's fault
noon on standby, sound of a
loud subsidy, din of flinty old
bison in a satin bastion, a last
nasty substation

synods on snot duty fund
untold bailouts as suits loot
booty. a stylus outbids soft-
bound bauds. slutty tonsils
obtain taboo files. Sunday
tabloids bait dolts

a noisy boss flays unfit
botany, lauds bonds and blond
subtotals bound in silty folios
as doily souls toil in foul soil
flaunt oily idols, silo lousy
bounty. solo oboists faint
in a ton of no-fault
sun

if only, soon, if only any
body, it's nobody's body
no body's body, no body

less than

refrainy night full of split seconds, cheezies in their beaks
twenty missed calls from incels on the far side of forget
the tallest podcast in the forest

claims most of my memories are memes i have swallowed
wholesale. the dejected egg rises from the park bench, slips
onto the conveyor belt

last night i saw the first brown spots appear on aging credit
cards. behind me, the roar of a cataract or staircase. do sea
goats swim or climb

an alphabet grows like a plant, hunts like an animal predator
i copy its spirals, sacs, hotline intelligence. all alphabets want
is a warm fire, parking

validations. jogging glaciers break into a gallop, chisel my face
into different sizes and hunting skills. long after the Machine
Age, radios still cyrano out

my window. extinct cave gods draw Teslas orbiting between
my ears. i step off Airforce 1 into 2019, crushing tiny skulls
full of factions so i can grow

larger eyes. every year the flood comes home. i shake the flat
landers from my heels, sandbag my basement DNA. i may
know less than i did yesterday

in the skin of mysteries

1

i am dumped onto a boat
left to bang my head on cloud banks, this goes on
for weeks until an idea drifts over the edge of my brain
where Columbus never planted his flag and monsters
still rule the ocean blue

unseen by the skeleton crew i drop
over the port side. eventually i reach land. the place
is pale, nameless, all volatile fields. i cleave to the road
leading to a cove and keep close watch
stars bite as they migrate

a river slips out of pack ice, explodes
behind me. customs agents scurry into each other
i look back, someone took the cove away. the reek
of hickory smoke lures me to the hotel
i am already checked in

table lamps leap over the bed
in the middle of an open plan. the first telegram
chortles, openly guffaws, i have no calls, i don't know
a soul, only the usual trolls bellowing
from the cellar

clock strikes hours, flips them down
the drain. i beat back vines, invasive pheasants
pluck a wrench from my violin case, start on the TV
drawing the curtain before streetlights
plunder the mini-bar

i bury my head in reeds and leaves
lizards peer at me. so much past erased by
a drunken Gideon lurching around the drawer
moon shearing the bones of the fire escape. no clue
who murdered 2015

the half past

a visiting blizzard shakes its
white over the hills, skirts into
the yard, the clothesline snaps
swings from the tree all night
long. i hear furniture crawling
down icy roads, sand trucks still
asleep. another hard-lit morning
the house wakes up, notices the
missing curtains, all the people
looking in

i know last night locked up
turned the stove off, did not
set foot anywhere but kitchen
and bathroom. the days hang
low on women and children
living on the fringes half past
no sound only the already
spoken bearing the body
away

shovel

i came through a rip in the fog, dressed in a cloak of locks
subject to whoopee cushion afflatus, i doodle the bugs scuttling into the aftermath
rain too sparse to cool underwood, fierce hiss of steaming trees. i toss a coin into
the wild-wind machine and rent an hour of dead air. furtive rom-coms rumble
through factory-farmed pastrami. summer, huge as a ham-and-cheese
sprawls on an ottoman. i don't know where to put all this light

i sail velvet paintings of the Yukon down canyons full of melancholy
gasoline blooms in the salallows just past Random. i order four plates of raw tropic
seas at the SurfnScurf. no matter how many aeolian liars peddle their heal-all
angelica. all the little hills voted for the bulldozer, they're the ones who iced
the old women and begged me to protect the pioneer, plant the rule of law
clear cut woods into sunlit lots, water features
and garden sans-culottes

Antares bleeds over the faces buried in crooked buildings
rancid sun slips down Twitter alley slick with footpads, coiners, cat-gut spinners
tripe merchants. my parents have resided a long time under sod where they have
no moon to blame. the eyeless stare at me from jars precisely placed in a room
made of greased beams, smoky tallow. my natural state is shadow
i warble a rebel ballad while boiling flesh from bone
then don my cross, my loop of rope
and go out again

nights sharp as a bowie, sap curfewed in trees, a draught
lifts the papers on my desk, fibres quivering under the weight of my
writing. night by night i stub my cigar into the hide of an old-growth elite
i clean and arrange my moths and unstrung lutes. tomorrow i shall move
the armadillo three feet to the right of the skulls. i purchased the bittern
thrust the burning brand into her face until night ate her up
i put away the lantern, hooks and ladder, roll up
the sacks, clean the shovel before i stow it
i'll be wanting it again

crypto

summer packs all its wallop in a bindle, hops
a train. snow waits for the day-labour trucks then drops
into a box, everywhere skies walking
into windows

i polish the tarnished horizon clasping my ankles
and pass the fascists breeding in potholes. clash of side
streets. cops stroll on patrol in pillowed sheets
axe handles swinging

dusk creeps along the banks of ancient
jests and tilt-yard escapades. midnight flashes my family
of paving stones. moon, mean as a clipped coin
oversees the falling children

clouds sloop into mucilage pools. i claw out
the riptide of family photos, score a dime bag of air
miles, reap today's gibbering from the monocle
glued to my pineal gland

unmatched femurs jam laundry chutes, pallets
of tinned narratives are loaded on wagons, rolling into
sponsored float camps moored at the mouth
of disappearance

the who-cares arrive salting carelessness
down QAnon Sound. not one, but countless serpents
rustling under my feet. 8chan aliases peer
through blockchain visas

self-reproach drifting in from the river, every
no one lurking in verges. i have just enough crypto-
night to buy balaclavas for all the pixels
hiding in the barrows

an ampersand walks through a phrase, attacks
the A-frames. the driverless Model T picks up a crate
of sisyphian roll-your-owns. lawyers stand on
the shoulders of assault rifles

what tumbles out next, a rootball of untold
tales, implications camped along empirical shores sent
to you alone, Private and Confidential
under separate cover

i can hear the Late carrying their ropes, baskets
and spades. i am not myself, i never had a self in that
real where White Beard holds the sickle and
ghosts flee the ovens

L

a ghostography

unknown where she came from, where she went. we don't even know what she looked like the very concept of L is at once mythic, and a perfect representation spliced from old media echoes, slant cries of seers, fools, no-tell winds

L, likely in her 17th or 18th year, would have been expected, many references suggest, an early biographer also concludes. a bit of gossip deepens the plot, what McFly allegedly said may well be, everybody agrees, everyone says so. when did every body become every one?

her first arrival from the pines, all too likely the day after her triumphant, let us assume, appearance at the graveyard, which raises. it is wrong to suppose, there is no evidence of her presence. was L a historical person, or derived from even more forgotten? impossible to dismiss latent prints

hearsay places her on the road late-summerish. L may have been surprised by the narrow streets, the anonymity, the bitter din of opinion. all this fuelled her art, an accepted but dubious homily for there is something else, a frisson, something not meant to be seen

we can log a plausible chronology of this early period, so let's not ponder the lost harmonics of Greek music but wonder if the figure seated apart from the group circled around the orchestra could be our subject. could the figure stepping out of the parentheses be L?

comedy, tragedy, the unsettled cached in the interval. was L's role ever recorded? in one version she was prologue, the next, epilogue. a flake of undated newsprint describes a show-opener sprightly with high-falutin metaphrasing chockful of quackery. motive must be inferred, no one seems to have known her real

also widely reported and believed. we may call up the document, gaze with wild surmise, yes, slip through gaslight trails of bloody thievery leading to the Shroud of Turin which is really the American spiel which is really the old English ballad. paleocriticism is an inexact science

she may have. it is estimated half the urban population of the world imitates those who imitate. what else would L do but copy? one can then imagine a restless figure inhaling one vision, exhaling another. L's star may have led her far from home, perhaps to *the bottomlands*, but this is moving too far ahead

could the record contradict the auditory evidence that she was indeed? the real of L's voice escapes us, archaic recordings of the day only echo her wild-mingling resonances falling to dark in the back alleys of kumbayas. was the Oxford comma intended?

possible, of course. scholars toss seven-elevens over old jubilation grounds. this is not to tie the unquiet together. lying outside her time we merely sense the sound-pictures soon to become. every reason to believe the shadow of L has passed, but as we know, she vanished into her twilight

we have witnesses, L stealing wind from beyond, wind of endless making. for a moment we rest, sure we have found her, but is it Homer, is it the gathering late, the confused Decameron from which she emerged? we may never know, winds don't come when called

sources agree L hoodooed words but where is she? not in footnotes or purloined indices reissued in ever-shifting editions. Plotinus spoke of being alone in the Alone that alone it may Alone. when did L divine within herself that fateful drift, that change in the deep blue sea

chimaera

all that fall
the knoll
in the wall
howled

moon river
slid down the
bannister

i paced the
cell-block
of my face
knowing
there was
so little
water left

he climbed
the stairs
the welcome
mat played
hot scat

his coke-
black hair
smoked in
the salty air

his hand
backfired
as he fed me
bits of live
bait

i kneaded
his thighs
averted my
eyes as he
pleaded for
more

his penis
a bruised
caduceus
in the silt
seeping out
the slit of my
collapsible
travel cup

no one
thought to
card the sand
after the dead
were brought
to shore